

What is claimed is:

1. A method for displaying and/or manipulating medical image data, the method comprising:

5 (a) providing a medical image viewer in compliance with a medical image standard;

(b) providing a file in compliance with the medical image standard to the medical image viewer, wherein the medical image standard specifies a first field for data not in compliance with the medical image standard and a second field for data in compliance with the medical image standard, wherein the first field of the file comprises medical image data and the second field of the file comprises information that can be used to obtain software to at least one of display and manipulate the medical image data;

10 (c) obtaining the software; and

(d) performing at least one of the following with the software: displaying the medical image data and manipulating the medical image data.

2. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the information in the second field comprises a message instructing a user how to obtain the software.

20 3. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the information in the second field comprises a link to a network location storing the software, and wherein the software is obtained in (c) in response to a user selecting the link.

25 4. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the information in the second field identifies a network location storing the software, and wherein the software is obtained in (c) without user action.

5. The invention of Claim 1 further comprising charging a fee to a user for the software.

6. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the medical image data comprises ultrasound data.

7. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the medical image data is selected from the group consisting of RF data, pre-scan converted data, pre-reconstruction data, and a three-dimensional data set.

8. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the medical image standard comprises DICOM.

9. The invention of Claim 8, wherein the first field comprise a DICOM private attribute, and wherein the second field comprises a DICOM standard attribute.

10. The invention of Claim 1, wherein (d) comprises displaying the medical image data.

11. The invention of Claim 1, wherein (d) comprises manipulating the medical image data.

12. The invention of Claim 1, wherein the file is provided to the medical image viewer via one of the following: a network, removable media, and a wireless transmission.

13. A medical image viewer comprising:  
a display device;  
a processor; and  
a storage device storing a file in compliance with a medical image standard, wherein the medical image standard specifies a first field for data not in compliance with the medical image standard and a second field for data in compliance with the medical image standard, wherein the first field of the file comprises medical image data and the

second field of the file comprises information that can be used to obtain software to at least one of display and manipulate the medical image data;

wherein the processor is operative to perform at least one of the following with the software: displaying the medical image data and manipulating the medical image data.

14. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the information in the second field comprises a message instructing a user how to obtain the software.

15. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the information in the second field comprises a link to a network location storing the software, and wherein the processor obtains the software in response to a user selecting the link.

16. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the information in the second field identifies a network location storing the software, and wherein the processor obtains the software without user action.

17. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the medical image data comprises ultrasound data.

18. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the medical image data is selected from the group consisting of RF data, pre-reconstruction data, and a three-dimensional data set.

19. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the medical image standard comprises DICOM.

20. The invention of Claim 19, wherein the first field comprise a DICOM private attribute, and wherein the second field comprises a DICOM standard attribute.

21. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the processor is operative to display the medical image data.

22. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the processor is operative to manipulate the medical image data.

5 23. The invention of Claim 13, wherein the file is provided to the medical image viewer via one of the following: a network, removable media, and a wireless transmission.

10 24. A method for displaying and/or manipulating medical image data, the method comprising:

- (a) providing a DICOM-compliant medical image viewer;
- (b) providing a file in compliance with DICOM to the medical image viewer,

15 wherein the file comprises a DICOM private attribute field comprising non-DICOM-compliant medical image data and a DICOM standard attribute field comprising information that can be used to obtain software to at least one of display and manipulate the medical image data;

- (c) obtaining the software; and
- (d) performing at least one of the following with the software: displaying the medical image data and manipulating the medical image data.

20 25. The invention of Claim 24, wherein the information in the second field comprises one of the following: a message instructing a user how to obtain the software, a link to a network location storing the software, and an identification of a network location storing the software.

25 26. The invention of Claim 24, wherein the medical image data is selected from the group consisting of ultrasound data, RF data, pre-reconstruction data, and a three-dimensional data set.

27. The invention of Claim 24, wherein the file is provided to the medical image viewer via one of the following: a network, removable media, and a wireless transmission.